



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Health Care Quality and Cost Council
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Chair

KATHARINE LONDON
Executive Director

Health Care Quality and Cost Council
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday October 17, 2007

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

One Ashburton 21st floor, room 1
Boston, MA

Attendees: JudyAnn Bigby (chair), Charlie Baker, Kevin Beagan, Elizabeth Capstick, James Conway, Kenneth LaBresh, Joseph Lawler, Tom Lee, Shannon Linde, Katharine London, Dolores Mitchell, Quentin Palfrey, Robert Seifert, Gregory Sullivan

I. Approval of Minutes

The Council approved minutes of its meeting October 17, 2007.

II. Executive Director's Report

HCQCC Staff have been working closely with the Data Manager vendor, the Maine Health Information Center, to get the data collection project up and running. MHIC has had individual discussions with all the major plans and will be holding a meeting for all health insurance carriers tomorrow 8:30-1 at the MA Health Data Consortium. MHIC's draft *Statistical Plan* is available on the HCQCC website for review.

III. Items for Discussion

A. Emergency Adoption of Regulation 129 CMR 3.00: Disclosure of Health Care Claims Data (*vote)

The Council postponed the discussion and vote on the draft regulation until its next meeting.

B. Discussion of Legislative Changes to St.2006, c.58, s.136

The Council had a broad discussion of issues raised by the House and Senate versions of a technical corrections bill amending this section. The Council recognized that Massachusetts public records law requires state agencies to make data and other records publicly available, except where there is a specific exemption from this public records requirement. For example, Massachusetts law prevents release of confidential data

identifying an individual patient, and c.58, s.136 prevents the release of payment rates for individual insurers.

The Council discussed the importance of protecting the data first and foremost to protect patient confidentiality. In addition, the Council discussed the need to prevent the data from being used for collusion, anti-competitive practices, and other purposes that are not in the public interest, and that could potentially cause health care costs to increase or health care quality to decrease.

At the same time, the Council recognized the value of the data as a unique resource that could be used for purposes that are in the public interest, such as understanding drivers of cost increases, identifying better processes of care, studying access to care, and measuring disparities in care.

The Council agreed that it wished to make its data available to the public for purposes that serve the public interest through a carefully controlled process. The Council asked staff to draft a revised section 136 that would give the Council statutory authority to restrict release of the data based on the type of data requested, how the data would be used, how the data would be protected, and the format in which results would be released.

C. Presentation from the Council's Communications and Web Design vendor, the SolomonMcCown & Associates and subcontractor Opinion Dynamics

Lauren Louison from SolomonMcCown and Chris Anderson from Opinion Dynamics discussed findings from a telephone survey Opinion Dynamics conducted of 500 Massachusetts consumers. The findings include pivotal information related to consumer interest and opinion that will be used in the next phase of the website project. Opinion Dynamics will be conducting focus groups in early December to refine our understanding of consumer views and get some initial feedback on the website look & feel. The Communications vendor will use all of this information to develop a Communications strategy for the Council and to design the website. The consumer survey results are currently posted on the HCQCC website.

IV. Committee Reports

Committee Chairs presented an overview of each committee's work to-date and assured the Council that committee members are working to set principles and recommendations which will later be presented to the Council.

Meeting Adjourned 3:57pm